Methicillin-Resistant Staphylococcus Aureus (MRSA)

Staphylococcus aureus or staph is a type of germ that lives on the skin and in the nose of most people. For many people, staph germs are harmless. The germs live on the skin and do not cause infection.

When staph does get into a part of the body where they do not belong, such as the bloodstream, the lungs or a wound, infection may occur. Antibiotics are given for treatment of the infection.

Methicillin-resistant staphylococcus aureus or MRSA is a type of staph that resists treatment. Only a few antibiotics are effective for treatment.

MRSA is most often spread from person to person through direct contact with skin or body fluids. MRSA can be spread by people when they share personal items, such as towels and razors.

If you have a MRSA infection, there are a few antibiotics that will kill the MRSA germs. Some people may also need surgery to get rid of the infection. Your doctor will determine the best treatment for you.

How to prevent MRSA infections in the hospital

Contact precautions will be used to prevent the spread of MRSA. This means you will have a single room or only share a room with someone else who also has MRSA.

- Everyone who enters your room will need to wear a gown and gloves, including any visitors. Staff members wear gloves and gowns when in direct contact with you or items in your room.
- They will wash their hands before and after your care with soap and water or use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer.
- Hospital equipment will be carefully washed.
- Family and friends will be asked to wear a gown and gloves. They will need to wash their hands with soap and water or use an alcohol based hand sanitizer before and after every visit.
- You may be asked to stay in your room to avoid contact with others. Avoid common areas, such as the cafeteria and gift shop. Be sure to wash your hands well before leaving your room.
MRSA testing in the hospital

You may be tested again for MRSA on another admission to the hospital. Testing involves swabbing three different areas of the body. If any of the swabs come back positive, you will be given a nasal antibiotic ointment to use and a special antiseptic soap to wash with each day for five days. When this time is over, you will be removed from isolation.

How to prevent MRSA at home

• Take antibiotics for as long as your doctor orders. Finish all of your antibiotics, including any refills if ordered.
• Wash your hands often with soap and water or use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer.
• Wear gloves if you have contact with blood or stool, such as changing diapers or changing a dressing for a wound, to prevent the spread of staph germs. Remember to wash your hands with soap and water after removing the gloves.
• Clean surfaces in bathrooms, the kitchen and other rooms with a household disinfectant or a diluted bleach solution. To mix a diluted bleach solution, add one-half cup of bleach to 4 cups of water.
• Wash your clothing and bed linens in the warmest temperature possible listed on the clothing care labels.
• Avoid sharing personal items with others.

Talk to your doctor or health care team if you have any questions about your care.

The Library for Health Information is available to help you find more health information at (614) 293-3707 or e-mail: health-info@osu.edu.

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